



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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J. TYLER McCAULEY  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

February 23, 2007

TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley *tm*  
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – KIDS FIRST  
FOUNDATION - HIGHLANDER CHILDREN'S SERVICES GROUP  
HOME**

We have completed a review of Highlander Children's Services Group Home (Group Home or Agency) operated by Kids First Foundation, Incorporated. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Highlander Children's Services Group Home is a 30-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 14-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Highlander Children's Services Group Home was providing services for three Probation children, ten San Bernardino County children, six San Diego County children, four Riverside County children, three San Mateo County children, two Ventura County children, one Alameda County child, and one Orange County child.

Highlander Children's Services Group Home is located in Riverside County.

**Scope of Review**

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covers basic child safety and licensing issues and includes an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection,

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

and interviews with children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with children are designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

### **Summary of Findings**

Generally, the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. The Agency needs to address several deficient areas.

Highlander Children's Services Group Home needs to repair or replace the cracked window in classroom two, the floor in the dining hall, the signs on all of the bathroom doors, the desks in the bedrooms, and the damaged tiles in the bathrooms in the Sequoia and Spruce units. The Group Home also needs to paint the side wall in the dining hall, clean or replace the carpet in the Cypress and Sequoia units, provide window coverings in the bedrooms, maintain comprehensive Needs and Services Plans that include short and long-term goals, and provide all children with the required minimum weekly allowance

Attached is a detailed report of the review.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Agency's management completed a corrective action plan (attached) which we approved. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Mike Pirolo at (626) 293-1110.

JTM:MP:CC:ec

[http://auditor.co.la.ca.us/group\\_home.asp](http://auditor.co.la.ca.us/group_home.asp)

### **Attachments**

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, DCFS  
Robert B. Taylor, Chief Probation Officer  
Dr. Randy Cima, Executive Director, Highlander Children's Services  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**Highlander Children's Services Group Home  
10001 County Farm Road  
Riverside, California 92503  
Phone: (951) 343-2536  
License Number: 336401070  
Rate Classification Level: 14**

**I. Facility and Environment**

**Method of assessment – Observation**

**Comments:**

Highlander Children's Services Group Home is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is well maintained. The front and back yards are clean and adequately landscaped.

Overall, the interior of the Group Home is well maintained. The common quarters are neat and clean. There is adequate furniture and lighting in the Group Home. The Group Home provides a home-like environment. However, in classroom two the window is cracked. In the dining hall, the floor is worn and the side wall has been repaired and not painted. The signs on all of the bathroom doors are broken and the tiles are broken in the bathrooms in the Sequoia and Spruce units. The carpet is dirty and stained in the dayroom in the Cypress and Sequoia units.

Overall, children's bedrooms are well maintained. The rooms are clean and orderly and have age-appropriate personalized decorations. There is adequate furniture, lighting, and storage space. Window screens are in good repair; however, there are no window coverings on any of the windows in the bedrooms. The desks in all of the bedrooms are stained and worn. The mattresses are comfortable, and the beds all have a full complement of linens. Children's sleeping arrangements are appropriate.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, a TV, and a DVD player. Books and resource materials, including a computer with a variety of programs, are also available.

The Group Home maintains a sufficient supply of perishable and non perishable foods.

**Recommendations**

**1. Highlander Children's Services Group Home management:**

- a. Repair or replace the window in classroom two.**
- b. Repair or replace the floor in the dining hall.**

- c. Paint the side wall in the dining hall.
- d. Repair or replace the bathroom door signs.
- e. Repair or replace the bathroom tiles in the Sequoia and Spruce unit, as needed.
- f. Clean or replace the carpet in Sequoia and Cypress dayroom.
- g. Provide window coverings in the children's bedrooms.
- h. Repair or replace the desks in the children's bedrooms.

## **II. Program Services**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Three**

### **Comments:**

Children meet the Group Home's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Children are assessed for needed services within thirty days of placement.

The treatment team develops and implements the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) with input from the child. The Needs and Services Plans are current; however, they are not comprehensive and do not include short and long term goals.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show that children are receiving treatment services.

### **Recommendation**

2. Highlander Children's Services Group Home management maintain comprehensive Needs and Services Plans that are measurable, attainable, and include short and long term goals.

## **III. Educational and Emancipation Services**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Three**

### **Comments:**

Children are attending school. Children are provided with educational support and

resources to meet their educational needs and are progressing satisfactorily in school. The Group Home's program includes the development of children's daily living, self-help, and survival skills.

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **IV. Recreation and Activities**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Three**

#### **Comments:**

The Group Home provides children with sufficient recreational activities and leisure time. Children are provided with opportunities to participate in planning activities.

Children participate in extra-curricular, enrichment, and social activities in which they have an interest.

The Group Home provides transportation to and from the activities.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **V. Psychotropic Medication**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents**

#### **Comments:**

Children have current court authorizations for psychotropic medication. Documentation confirms that children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Children are informed about their psychotropic medication and are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **VI. Personal Rights**

### **Method of assessment –Interviews with children**

**Sample size: Three**

#### **Comments:**

Children are informed about the Group Home's policies and procedures. Children report that they feel safe in the Group Home and are provided with appropriate staff supervision. Children express satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff and report that staff treats them with respect and dignity.

Children report that they are assigned chores that are reasonable and not too demanding. Children are able to make and receive personal telephone calls, send and receive unopened mail, and have private visitors. Children are able to attend religious services of their choice.

Children report that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Children report satisfaction with meals and snacks.

Children receive voluntary medical, dental, and psychiatric care.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **VII. Clothing and Allowance**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Three**

#### **Comments:**

The Group Home provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance to children. Children are provided with opportunities to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to children is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

Children spend their allowances as they choose. However, the Group Home does not provide children with the required minimum weekly allowance.

The Group Home provides children with adequate personal care items. The children are also encouraged and assisted in creating and maintaining photo albums/life books.

**Recommendation**

- 3. Highlander Children's Services Group Home management provide children with the required minimum weekly allowance.**

## Highlander Children's Services

10001 County Farm Road, Riverside 92503  
TEL: 909-343-2536 FAX: 909-343-2541

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September 1, 2006

TO: Elaine Clarke, M.A.  
Department of Auditor-Controller  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Suite 515-A  
Los Angeles, California 90012

COPY TO: Candace Rhue  
Group Home Audit Supervisor  
Department of Auditor-Controller  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 W. Temple St.  
Room 515-A  
Log Angeles, California 90012

Dear Ms. Clarke:

Per our recent conversation on June 11, to follow is a brief summary of the corrections we have made regarding your site visit to our facility. As I mentioned during our phone conversation, all recommendations have been addressed and completed, with two exceptions. I appreciate you giving us until the end of August to complete all projects. That should be ample time to finish everything.

We have about one half of the resident's desks completed. As I stated, this had turned out to be quite an undertaking. The 7 foot desks have to be dismantled and removed from the rooms and taken outside to work on. It takes about a half day to completed sand the surface of one desk. Then, once sanded, we have to apply a coat of lacquer, let it dry for a day, and apply a second coat, with another day to dry. While we have some of our residents assisting our maintenance department, this has been a labor intensive project. It's turned into a good learning experience for some of our kids as well. I appreciate your understanding. This has been a focus of ours.

Also, as we discussed, we are preparing to put in window coverings on more than 40 windows in our facility. With the extra time, we will be able to consider a few options. We've looking both at functionality of the window coverings while making them aesthetically pleasing. We will be looking at perhaps tinting the very tall windows, with a valence, and perhaps using some sort of Velcro system on the windows the boys can access. We are looking at other options as well.



Highlander Children's Services  
**PLAN OF CORRECTION**

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June 22, 2006

**Los Angeles County Audit Recommendations:**

Physical Plant

1. Repair or replace window in classroom two.  
**Completed. Window was replaced in classroom two. Maintenance department will continually do routine checks to ensure that broken windows are repaired immediately upon noted damage. Safety team leader will follow up to ensure all repairs have been completed.**
2. Clean or refinish the floor and repair and paint the side wall in the dining hall  
**Completed. Dining hall floor was refinished, walls were repainted. Maintenance department will ensure that the dining area is appropriately maintained. Safety team leader will follow up to ensure all repairs have been completed.**
3. Repair or replace the door signs on the bathroom doors, as needed.  
**Completed. Door signs were replaced on all bathroom doors in dorms. Maintenance department will continue to monitor that all signs are present and free of damage. Safety team leader will follow up to ensure all repairs have been completed.**
4. Repair or replace the broken tiles in the bathrooms in Sequoia and Spruce unit.  
**Completed. Broken tiles were replaced in both Sequoia and Spruce bathrooms. Maintenance department will perform routine checks of all facility restrooms. Safety team leader will follow up to ensure all repairs have been completed.**
5. Clean the carpet in Sequoia and Cypress dayroom  
**Completed Carpets have been cleaned in both Sequoia and Cypress dorms. Agency has initiated a → Contract with service to have carpets done quarterly. Maintenance will follow-up and maintain carpets in between scheduled service. Safety team leader will maintain contact with Carpet Company and ensure that all floors are cleaned upon schedule.**
6. Provide window coverings in the children's bedrooms  
**Completed- Window coverings have been placed on residents windows throughout the facility. Safety team leader will ensure that window coverings are cleaned and maintained.**

7. Refinish or replace the desks in the children's bedrooms  
**Completed- All desks have been refinished in resident's rooms. Maintenance department will perform routine checks of all bedroom desks. Safety team leader will follow up to ensure all repairs have been completed.**

Program Services

8. Highlander Children's Services Group Home management maintains comprehensive Needs and Services Plans that are measurable, attainable and include short and long-term goals. **Revised and completed. Plans will be more specific there will be a permanency area where residents will be discharged to and a revised area regarding residents completion of goals or goal extension. Director of Treatment Services will do routine in house audits on all resident files and reports.**

Educational and Emancipation Services

No Recommendations

Recreation and Activities

No Recommendations

Psychotropic Medication

No Recommendations

Personal Rights

No Recommendations

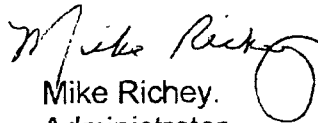
Clothing and Allowance

9. Highlander Children's Services Group Home management provide children with the required minimum weekly allowance.  
**This required some revision to our current allowance system. We wanted to ensure that this would apply to all residents (not just the residents from L.A. County). In addition, it required some discussion with our resident council as well as our bookkeeping department. This has been done, and will be announced at our next resident council Assembly. All resident at our facility will receive a minimum of \$7/week in allowance,**

All photographs will be included in final report in August.

To follow is a summary of what we have completed. All changes have been photographed wherever necessary. As you suggested, we will submit everything by the end of August when all items are completed. Thank you again for your support and guidance. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Mike Richey.  
Administrator

cc: j. trew  
q. strong  
c. richardson